

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 11th, 2003

The Honorable Ralph Regula, Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0005

The Honorable David R. Obey, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0005

Dear Chairman Regula and Ranking Member Obey:

On behalf of the 4 million Americans and their families who now suffer from Alzheimer's disease – as well as the estimated 14 million Americans who will suffer from this dreadful disease in less than 50 years if things do not change – we are writing to urge the committee to provide continued support for vital research and patient assistance programs. While we have made progress in recent years in our efforts to find a cause and therapies for Alzheimer's disease, time is of an extreme essence and we must increase our efforts if we are to prevent an impending catastrophe.

Specifically, we are asking that you increase funding at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) so that it is sufficient to accommodate an expansion of Alzheimer's research to \$1 billion beginning as soon as possible. We believe an increase of \$200 million across the board for all relevant NIH agencies that conduct research on Alzheimer's will enable researchers to find effective ways to prevent and treat it.

Millions of Americans, including the families caring for Alzheimer's patients, are profoundly grateful to you for your commitment to the NIH, an investment that already is providing an accelerating return to our nation in the form of new ways to diagnose, treat and prevent disease. The diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's disease, for example, has undergone fundamental transformations thanks to NIH-funded research. But more must be done.

If we are serious about saving our health care system and controlling the costs of Medicare and Medicaid, we must immediately and substantially increase the investment into Alzheimer's research. Within the next decade alone, annual Medicare costs for individuals with Alzheimer's disease will increase 55 percent – to nearly \$50 billion. Alzheimer's disease is also a major cost driver of the Medicaid program. We have a narrow window of time. An investment in research now has the potential to save the baby boomers from this disease. If we don't find the answers now, Alzheimer's disease will continue to drive up Medicare and Medicaid costs and make efforts to balance the budget


more difficult. Alzheimer's will bankrupt family, state, and federal budgets as up to 14 million baby boomers succumb to the disease. Scientists estimate that an investment of an additional \$200 million this year, and a total annual investment of \$1 billion as soon as possible, could help avoid this calamity.


Research, as you know, is only part of the solution to this problem for it does little to help the millions of Americans – and their families – who are suffering today. Because of this, it is also critically important that we support caregiver enhancement programs throughout the nation. We are asking, therefore, that the committee appropriate \$2.25 million to fully fund the Alzheimer's Clinical Research and Training Program, which helps to improve diagnosis, treatment and prevention methods.

We also ask that you help expand the Alzheimer's Matching Grant Program to \$25 million, enabling all 50 states to reach Alzheimer's families in underserved areas, particularly minority and rural communities. This project helps ensure that all patients with Alzheimer's, regardless of where they live, can receive the same standards of care. Another program crucial to attaining this goal is the National Family Caregiver Support Program, which helps states and communities develop or expand respite, adult day care, and other supportive services for caregivers for persons of all ages and disabilities. We are asking that this program be funded at \$250 million in FY 04.

To help ensure Alzheimer's patients are safe and can be quickly located should they wander from their homes, we are asking that the committee continue to provide \$900,000 for Safe Return, a nation-wide system through the Department of Justice that helps law enforcement and public safety personnel locate and protect persons with Alzheimer's who inadvertently leave home unattended.

On behalf of all Americans who suffer from Alzheimer's, their family members and caregivers who work so hard to comfort them, and the millions of Americans who will be future Alzheimer's patients, we thank the committee for its attention to this matter. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to contact either Nick Manetto with Rep. Smith at 5-3765 or Kendra Bodnar with Rep. Markey at 5-2836.


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